

The Real Story of the Midnight Ride of Paul Revere

A LETTER FROM COL. PAUL REVERE TO THE CORRESPONDING SECRETARY JEREMY BELKNAP (1798)

Dear Sir,

Having a little leisure, I wish to fulfill my promise, of giving you some facts, and Anecdotes, prior to the Battle of Lexington, which I do not remember to have seen in any history of the American Revolution.

In the year 1773 I was employed by the Select men of the Town of Boston to carry the Account of the Destruction of the Tea to New-York; and afterwards, 1774, to Carry their dispatches to New-York and Philadelphia for Calling a Congress; and afterwards to Congress, several times. In the Fall of 1774 and Winter of 1775 I was one of upwards of thirty, chiefly mechanics, who formed our selves in to a Committee for the purpose of watching the Movements of the British Soldiers, and gaining every intelligence of the movements of the Tories (Loyalists). We held our meetings at the Green-Dragon Tavern. We were so carefull that our meetings should be kept Secret; that every time we met, every person swore upon the Bible, that they would not discover any of our transactions, But to Messrs. HANCOCK, ADAMS, Doctors WARREN, CHURCH, and one or two more.

About November, when things began to grow Serious, a Gentleman who had Conections with the Tory (Loyalist) party, but was a Whig (Patriot) at heart, acquainted me, that our meetings were discovered, and mentioned the identical words that were spoken among us the Night before. We did not then distrust Dr. Church, but supposed it must be some one among us. We removed to another place, which we thought was more secure: but here we found that all our transactions were communicated to Governor Gage. (This came to me through the then Secretary Flucker; He told it to the Gentleman mentioned above). It was then a common opinion, that there was a Traytor in the provincial Congress, and that (British General) Gage was posessed of all their Secrets. (Church was a member of that Congress for Boston.) In the Winter, towards the Spring, we frequently took Turns, two and two, to Watch the Soldiers, By patrolling the Streets all night. The Saturday Night preceding the 19th of April, about 12 oClock at Night, the Boats belonging to the Transports were all launched, and carried under the Sterns of the Men of War. (They had been previously hauld up and repaired). We likewise found that the Grenadiers and light Infantry (British soldiers) were all taken off duty.

From these movements, we expected something serious was [to] be transacted. On Tuesday evening, the 18th, it was observed, that a number of Soldiers were marching towards the bottom of the Common. About 10 o'Clock, Dr. Warren Sent in great haste for me, and begged that I would imediately Set off for Lexington, where Messrs. Hancock and Adams were, and acquaint them of the Movement, and that it was thought they were the objets. When I got to Dr. Warren's house, I found he had sent an express by land to Lexington—a Mr. Wm. Daws. The Sunday before, by desire of Dr. Warren, I had been to Lexington, to Mess. Hancock and Adams, who were at the Rev. Mr. Clark's. I returned at Night thro Charlestown; there I agreed with a Col. Conant, and some other Gentlemen, that if the British went out by Water, we would shew two Lanthorns in the North Church Steeple; and if by Land, one, as a Signal; for we were apprehensive it would be difficult to Cross the Charles River, or git over Boston neck. I left Dr. Warrens, called upon a friend, and desired him to make the Signals. I then went Home, took my Boots and Surtout, and went to the North part of the Town, Where I had kept a Boat; two friends rowed me across Charles River, a little to the eastward where the Somerset Man of War lay. It was then young flood, the Ship was winding, and the moon was Rising. They landed me on Charlestown side. When I got into Town, I met Col. Conant, and several others; they said they had seen our signals. I told them what was Acting, and went to git me a Horse; I got a Horse of Deacon Larkin. While the Horse was preparing, Richard Devens, Esq. who was one of the Committee of Safty, came to me, and told me, that he came down the Road from Lexington, after Sundown, that evening; that He met ten British Officers, all well mounted, and armed, going up the Road.

I set off upon a very good Horse; it was then about 11 o'Clock, and very pleasant. After I had passed Charlestown Neck, and got nearly opposite where Mark was hung in chains, I saw two men on Horse back, under a Tree. When I got near them, I discovered they were British officer. One tryed to git a head of Me, and the

other to take me. I turned my Horse very quick, and Galloped towards Charlestown neck, and then pushed for the Medford Road. The one who chased me, endeavoring to Cut me off, got into a Clay pond, near where the new Tavern is now built. I got clear of him, and went thro Medford, over the Bridge, and up to Menotomy. In Medford, I awaked the Captain of the Minute men; and after that, I alarmed almost every House, till I got to Lexington. I found Messrs. Hancock and Adams at the Rev. Mr. Clark's; I told them my errand, and inquired for Mr. Daws; they said he had not been there; I related the story of the two officers, and supposed that He must have been stopped, as he ought to have been there before me. After I had been there about half an Hour, Mr. Daws came; we refreshid our selves, and set off for Concord, to secure the Stores, &c. there. We were overtaken by a young Doctor Prescott, whom we found to be a high Son of Liberty. I told them of the ten officers that Mr. Devens mett, and that it was probable we might be stoped before we got to Concord; for I supposed that after Night, they divided them selves, and that two of them had fixed themselves in such passages as were most likely to stop any intelegence going to Concord. I likewise mentioned, that we had better allarm all the Inhabitents till we got to Concord; the young Doctor much approved of it, and said, he would stop with either of us, for the people between that and Concord knew him, and would give the more credit to what we said. We had got nearly half way. Mr Daws and the Doctor stoped to allarm the people of a House: I was about one hundred Rod a head, when I saw two men, in nearly the same situation as those officer were, near Charlestown. I called for the Doctor and Daws to come up;—in an Instant I was surrounded by four;—they had placed themselves in a Straight Road, that inclined each way; they had taken down a pair of Barrs on the North side of the Road, and two of them were under a tree in the pasture. The Doctor being foremost, he came up; and we tryed to git past them; but they being armed with pistols and swords, they forced us in to the pasture;—the Doctor jumped his Horse over a low Stone wall, and got to Concord. I observed a Wood at a Small distance, and made for that. When I got there, out Started Six officers, on Horse back, and orderd me to dismount;—one of them, who appeared to have the command, examined me, where I came from, and what my Name Was? I told him. He asked me if I was an express? I answered in the afirmative. He demanded what time I left Boston? I told him; and aded, that their troops had caught aground in passing the River, and that There would be five hundred Americans there in a short time, for I had alarmed the Country all the way up. He imediately rode towards those who stoppd us, when all five of them came down upon a full gallop; one of them, whom I afterwards found to be Major Mitchel, of the 5th Regiment, Clapped his pistol to my head, called me by name, and told me he was going to ask me some questions, and if I did not give him true answers, he would blow my brains out. He then asked me similar questions to those above. He then orderd me to mount my Horse, after searching me for arms. He then orderd them to advance, and to lead me in front. When we got to the Road, they turned down towards Lexington. When we had got about one Mile, the Major Rode up to the officer that was leading me, and told him to give me to the Sergeant. As soon as he took me, the Major orderd him, if I attempted to run, or any body insulted them, to blow my brains out. We rode till we got near Lexington Meeting-house, when the Militia fired a Voley of Guns, which appeared to alarm them very much. The Major inquired of me how far it was to Cambridge, and if there were any other Road? After some consultation, the Major Rode up to the Sargent, and asked if his Horse was tired? He answered him, he was--(He was a Sargent of Grenadiers, and had a small Horse)—then, said He, take that man's Horse. I dismounted, and the Sargent mounted my Horse, when they all rode towards Lexington Meeting-House. I went across the Burying-ground, and some pastures, and came to the Revd. Mr. Clark's House, where I found Messrs. Hancock and Adams. I told them of my treatment, and they concluded to go from that House to wards Woburn. I went with them, and a Mr. Lowell, who was a Clerk to Mr. Hancock. When we got to the House where they intended to stop, Mr. Lowell and my self returned to Mr. Clark's, to find what was going on. When we got there, an elderly man came in; he said he had just come from the Tavern, that a Man had come from Boston, who said there were no British troops coming. Mr. Lowell and my self went towards the Tavern, when we met a Man on a full gallop, who told us the Troops were coming up the Rocks. We afterwards met another, who said they were close by. Mr. Lowell asked me to go to the Tavern with him, to git a Trunk of papers belonging to Mr. Hancock. We went up Chamber; and while we were giting the Trunk, we saw the British very near, upon a full March. We hurried to wards Mr. Clark's House. In our way, we passed through the Militia. There were about 50. When we had got about 100 Yards from the meeting-House the British Troops appeard on both Sides of the Meeting-House. In their Front was an Officer on Horse back. They made a Short Halt; *when I saw, and heard, a Gun fired*, which appeared to be a Pistol. Then I could distinguish two Guns, and then a Continual roar of Musquetry; When we made off with the Trunk.

As I have mentioned Dr. Church, perhaps it might not be disagreeable to mention some Matters of my own knowledge, respecting Him. He appeared to be a high son of Liberty. He frequented all the places where they met, Was incouraged by all the leaders of the Sons of Liberty, and it appeared he was respected by them,

though I knew that Dr. Warren had not the greatest affection for him. He was esteemed a very capable writer, especially in verse; and as the Whig party needed every Strength, they feared, as well as courted Him. Though it was known, that some of the Liberty Songs, which We composed, were parodied by him, in favor of the British, yet none dare charge him with it. I was a constant and critical observer of him, and I must say, that I never thought Him a man of Principle; and I doubted much in my own mind, whether He was a real Whig. I knew that He kept company with a Capt. Price, a half-pay British officer, and that He frequently dined with him, and Robinson, one of the Commissioners. I know that one of his intimate acquaintances asked him why he was so often with Robinson and Price? His answer was, that He kept Company with them on purpose to find out their plans. The day after the Battle of Lexington, I met him in Cambridge, when He shew me some blood on his stocking, which he said spilted on him from a Man who was killed near him, as he was urging the Militia on. I well remember, that I argued with my self, if a Man will risque his life in a Cause, he must be a Friend to that cause; and I never suspected him after, till He was charged with being a Traytor.

The same day I met Dr. Warren. He was President of the Committee of Safety. He engaged me as a Messenger, to do the out of doors business for that committee; which gave me an opportunity of being frequently with them. The Friday evening after, about sun set, I was sitting with some, or near all that Committee, in their room, which was at Mr. Hastings's House at Cambridge. Dr. Church, all at once, started up—Dr. Warren, said He, I am determined to go into Boston tomorrow—(it set them all a staring)—Dr. Warren replied, Are you serious, Dr. Church? they will Hang you if they catch you in Boston. He replied, I am serious, and am determined to go at all adventures. After a considerable conversation, Dr. Warren said, If you are determined, let us make some business for you. They agreed that he should go to get medicine for their and our Wounded officers. He went the next morning; and I think he came back on Sunday evening. After He had told the Committee how things were, I took him a side, and inquired particularly how they treated him? he said, that as soon as he got to their lines on Boston Neck, they made him a prisoner, and carried him to General Gage, where He was examined, and then He was sent to Gould's Barracks, and was not suffered to go home but once. After He was taken up, for holding a Correspondence with the British, I came a Cross Deacon Caleb Davis;—we entered into Conversation about Him;—He told me, that the morning Church went into Boston, He (Davis) received a Bilet for General Gage—he then did not know that Church was in Town)—When he got to the General's House, he was told, the General could not be spoke with, that He was in private with a Gentleman; that He waited near half an Hour,—When General Gage and Dr. Church came out of a Room, discoursing together, like persons who had been long acquainted. He appeared to be quite surprized at seeing Deacon Davis there; that he (Church) went where he pleased, while in Boston, only a Major Caine, one of Gage's Aids, went with him. I was told by another person whom I could depend upon, that he saw Church go in to General Gage's House, at the above time; that He got out of the Chaise and went up the steps more like a Man that was acquainted, than a prisoner.

Sometime after, perhaps a Year or two, I fell in company with a Gentleman who studied with Church—in discoursing about him, I related what I have mentioned above; He said, He did not doubt that He was in the Interest of the British; and that it was He who informed Gen. Gage That he knew for Certain, that a Short time before the Battle of Lexington, (for He then lived with Him, and took Care of his Business and Books) He had no money by him, and was much drove for money; that all at once, He had several Hundred New British Guineas; and that He thought at the time, where they came from.

Thus, Sir, I have endeavoured to give you a Short detail of some matters, of which perhaps no person but my self have documents, or knowledge. I have mentioned some names which you are acquainted with: I wish you would Ask them, if they can remember the Circumstances I alude to.

I am, Sir, with every Sentment of esteem,

Your Humble Servant,

Paul Revere

Col. Revere's Letter.

The Real Story of the Midnight Ride of Paul Revere Questions

- 1) How many years after the fact is Paul Revere recalling the events of his ride? _____
- 2) Revere was one of _____ men who were responsible for watching British movements in Boston.
- 3) What was the name of the tavern where Revere and the other Sons of Liberty held their secret meetings? _____
- 4) Before each meeting what did Revere and the others have to do to prove that they would keep their discussions a secret? _____
- 5) Revere lists the names of four other people who attended the Sons of Liberty's secret meetings. What four names did he list? _____
- 6) When Revere got to Dr. Warren's house he found out that a rider had been sent out ahead of him to warn that the British were on their way. What was the name of that rider? _____
- 7) When Paul Revere began his ride to warn the others that the British were on there way, what time was it? _____
- 8) Was Paul Revere captured on his ride? _____
- 9) If he did not tell the truth to the British, what did they threaten to do to him? _____
- 10) Revere and a man named Mr. Lowell were attempting to retrieve a trunk when they heard the first shots fired at Lexington. What was in the trunk that Revere and Mr. Lowell were looking for?

- 11) In question 5 you listed four names that Revere listed as being at every meeting. One of these four people ended up being a traitor and passed Secrets of the Sons of Liberty on to General Gage and the British. Who was the traitor? _____
- 12) How was the traitor discovered? _____